

Applicants : Ryan D. Tasma, David H. Cotter and Ronald C. Ehlert
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Remarks:

The amendments and remarks presented herein are believed to be fully responsive to the Advisory Action dated December 19, 2006.

Claims 2-12, 17-19, 21-34 and 57-64 are pending in the application. Claims 1, 15, 16, 20 and 51-56 have been previously canceled without prejudice, and claims 19, 21 and 26 have been amended as set forth above, and new claim 64 has been added. The amendments and new claim are fully supported in the specification and drawings as originally filed. No new matter has been added.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW CONDUCTED DECEMBER 6, 2006

The undersigned attorney would like to thank Examiners Nicholson and Crawford for the courtesies extended during the personal interview conducted on December 6, 2006. During the interview, the undersigned was given the opportunity to discuss the differences between the claimed invention and the prior art of record. The amendments made in the previous response were discussed during the interview and the Examiners indicated that those amendments should overcome the previous rejections. The above amendments are made to further clarify independent claim 19 in a similar manner as was discussed during the interview, in order to further overcome the present rejection.

ALLOWED AND ALLOWABLE CLAIMS

Claims 2-12, 17, 18, 33 and 57-63 are allowed. Claims 26, 27, 29-32 and 34 were indicated as being drawn to allowable subject matter and as being allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicants have amended claims 26 and 29 to be in independent form so that claims 26, 27, 29-32 and 34 are in condition for allowance.

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CLAIM REJECTIONS

Claims 19, 21-25 and 28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Itoh et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,763,927 ("Itoh"). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection for at least the reasons set forth below.

Applicants have amended independent claim 19 to clarify that the idler rollers are arranged so as to convey articles along the tandem zones in a direction of conveyance that is generally along the sidewalls and from an upstream tandem zone to a downstream tandem zone.

Applicants respectfully submit that Itoh does not disclose or suggest the roller conveyor of the present invention, particularly as set forth in independent claim 19 and in the claims depending therefrom. Itoh discloses a conveying apparatus having belt conveyors 11, with a transverse transporting means or device 43 disposed between two belt conveyors 11. The transverse transporting means includes six pulleys 73 positioned between the adjacent belt conveyors 11. The transverse transporting means functions to lift an article being conveyed along the belt conveyors and displace the article sideways on the roller conveyor line so as to transfer the article to a branch line.

Thus, Applicants submit that Itoh does not disclose or suggest the roller conveyor as claimed in independent claim 19. For example, Itoh does not disclose or suggest a roller conveyor, particularly a roller conveyor with two tandem zones. Nor does Itoh disclose or suggest, for example, at least two tandem zones with each of the at least two tandem zones comprising a plurality of idler rollers mounted to the sidewalls of the roller conveyor, and with the idler rollers being arranged so as to convey articles along the tandem zones in a direction of conveyance that is generally along the sidewalls and from an upstream tandem zone to a downstream tandem zone. Nor does Itoh disclose or suggest, for example, that each zone of the roller conveyor has a transverse drive system that is independently operable to rotatably drive at least some of the

plurality of rollers of the respective ones of the at least two tandem zones. In stark contrast to the claimed invention, the pulleys 73 of Itoh are arranged to convey articles in a direction transverse to the sidewalls of the zones and the energized roller of Itoh drives the pulleys of the transverse transporting means, not idler rollers of tandem zones of a roller conveyor. Thus, Itoh teaches away from the present invention of independent claim 19 and the claims depending therefrom.

Applicants have also amended claim 21 to be in independent form. Claim 21 was not specifically addressed in the Office Action. Applicants submit that Itoh does not disclose or suggest, for example, a conveyor with a transverse drive system that is operable to accumulate articles on the rollers of the tandem zones in response to article sensors. Thus, Applicants submit that independent claim 21 is also in condition for allowance.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Itoh, either alone or in combination with any other prior art of record, does not disclose, teach, suggest or render obvious the roller conveyor of the present invention, particularly as set forth in independent claim 19 and in the claims depending therefrom. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of claims 19, 21-25 and 28 is respectfully requested.

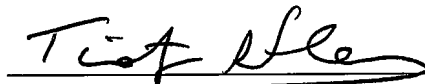
Claims 2-12, 17-19, 21-34 and 57-64 are pending in the application. Applicants respectfully submit that claims 2-12, 17-19, 21-34 and 57-64 are in condition for allowance and a notice to that effect is earnestly and respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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By: Van Dyke, Gardner, Linn & Burkhart, LLP

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